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A PETITION *presented to the* KING *of* France, *By the Protestants in His Kingdom, who have been formerly constrain'd to Embrace the* Roman Religion.

Lond. 1697

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To the KING.

SIR,

OUR Subjects, who profess a Religion which the Edicts call the *Pretended Reformed*: and of which you have forbid 'em the Publick Exercise for some Years, come to throw themselves at Your Majesty's Feet, to make known to Your Majesty their humble Remonstrances, and to implore Your Compassion upon their Miseries, which are so dreadful, that Your Majesty cannot cast Your Eyes upon their deplorable Condition, without some Pity upon their Sufferings. Your Majesty, Sir, has always made it Your Chief Glory to stop the Progress of Your Arms, and to suspend the Course of Your Victories, in order to give Peace to *Europe*. Must Your own Subjects, who never violated the Fidelity which they owe You, and which the Religion that they profess enjoyns 'em to pay You, be the only Persons that are to be depriv'd of Your Royal Bounty? What have they done, and of what Deformed Colours have their Enemies made use of, to black'n 'em in Your Majesty's Eyes?

They are perswaded, that next to their Duty to God, they are oblig'd to pay Your Majesty an unlimited Obedience. They know no Person upon Earth who can absolve 'em from that Fidelity which is Your due. To Fear God, and Honour Your Majesty, to spend their Estates and Lives in Your Majesty's Service, this among 'em is an inviolable Maxim which they take care to inculcate into their Children. No Troubles of the Preceding Reigns can be imputed to them without the highest Injustice. Your Majesty is too clear-sighted, and Your Council too penetrating, not to be well Satisfy'd that those Commotions were caus'd either by Princes, lawful heirs to the Crown, which they transmitted to your Majesty, in defending it against those who attempted to usurp it, or by some Grandees of the Kingdom, who never want pretences, especially when they have conceiv'd an Opinion, that a chief Minister abuses the Authority of his Prince. In a word, since your Majesty ascended the Throne, and took the Reins of Government into Your own Hands, your Suppliants never departed from their Duty. They can also

boaſt the Approbation wherewith Your Majeſty has Honour'd their Fidelity, which has always been firm and conſtant, tho' they were Powerfully ſollicited in the Time of Your Majeſty's Minority, whoſe undoubted Right they have always held Inviolable and Sacred.

We make no queſtion, Sir, but that we have been painted forth to Your Majeſty, too much taken up with publick Affairs, thoroughly to underſtand our Religion, as a ſort of People whom a pure Spirit of Libertiniſm held engaged in our Profeſſion, and who would quit it without any Trouble or Remorſe, ſo ſoon as they ſhould behold it beſet with Thorns, and Inviron'd with dreadful Calamities and Torments, by the multitude of Edicts and Declarations which they wreſted in a manner out of Your Majeſty's hands. But we Implore Your Majeſty, Sir, by that Royal Goodneſs which cauſes the Repoſe of Your Subjects to reflect at preſent upon the Counſels which have been given Your Majeſty, and upon this pretended Libertiniſm, with which they have diſfigur'd us in Your Majeſty's ſight. They can never ſay, that a Spirit of Libertiniſm could oblige ſo many Thouſand Perſons to quit their Country, a Country full of all manner of Bleſſings, to beg their Bread among Foreigners, to expoſe themſelves to the danger of being confin'd to Priſons, Cloiſters, or ſent to the Galleys, as ſome have been of all Conditions and Characters. Of neceſſity, Sir, the Power of Conſcience muſt be very great that can prevail with Men to undergo ſuch Extremities.

'Tis true, that if a Conſcience ignorant and prejudic'd by falſe Principles ſhould engage in Crimes that troubl'd the Repoſe of Society, Your Majeſty had reaſon to ſuppreſs the Licenciouſneſs of a Turbulent and Criminal Conſcience. But, Sir, we are convinc'd that our greateſt Enemies can lay no ſuch thing to our Charge. Our Morals are pure, and without Reproach, in reſpect of God, in reſpect of Your Majeſty, and in reſpect of Society. As for our Doctrine, of what Error can they convict it? We admit the Symbols of Faith compos'd by the firſt Oecumenic Councils, and the Symbol or Creed which is call'd the Apoſtles. We believe in one God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt. We believe our ſelves Redeem'd by the Sacrifice of Jeſus Chriſt, our God and Redeemer, provided we partake of the Merits of his Death, and Sufferings, by a lively Faith, operating in Good Works, and by a ſincere Repentance. We admit in the Holy *Euchariſt*, a Spiritual Eating of the Fleſh of Jeſus Chriſt. We Baptize in the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt, for the Remiſſion of ſins. We Invoke the Almighty in the Name of Jeſus Chriſt, and by his Interceſſion, as he commanded us. This, Sir, is the Subſtance of our Religion. Your Doctors agree upon all theſe Articles, and admit 'em as we do.

We cannot adore the Sacrament of the *Euchariſt*, and it cannot be deny'd but that we ſhould be Idolaters if we ſhould adore it, conſidering the Opinions which we hold; ſo that no body can conſtrain us to it, without forcing us to commit the greateſt of Crimes. We implore Your Majeſty to think of it.

Pardon

Pardon us, Sir, if we ſpeak freely to Your Majeſty upon the Subject of Our Tears and Groans. We are not, Sir, whatever Name they give us; we are not thoſe Ancient Hereticks againſt whom the Church has juſtly fulminated, becauſe they had nothing but the Name of Chriſtian, which they diſhonour'd as well by the Monſtrouſneſs of their Doctrine, as the Impurity of their Morals. If we refuſe to believe the Doctrine of Purgatory and Indulgences, the Invocation of Saints, the Worſhip of Images, the Veneration of Relicks, and thoſe other petty Devotions, Invented by the Monks in the latter Ages, 'tis becauſe thoſe Points are not to be found in the Holy Scripture, and we believe we cannot admit 'em with a ſafe Conſcience upon the Warrant of Humane Authority.

We ſpeak, Sir, of *Humane Authority*; for we are convinc'd, that if God had been pleas'd to erect a viſible Tribunal upon Earth, to which we ſhould ſubmit our Conſciences in Matters of Religion, this infallible Tribunal would, without all Contradiction, have been ſo characteriz'd, that it would have been an eaſie thing to have known it. It highly concern'd the ſafety and Repoſe of the Conſciences of the Faithful. Now Your Majeſty well knows, that even in your own Communion, this Tribunal is a thing conteſted between the Pope and the Councils. All the Doctors of Your Kingdom decide it in favour of the Councils. All the Doctors of *Italy*, and many others, hold for the Pope. The Difficulties alledg'd on Both ſides are ſo conſiderable, that not being able with that Certainty which the Faith requires, to find out this Infallible Tribunal, we believe it the ſafeſt way to follow the Word of God only, for the Rule of Faith. And to us it ſeems that our Conduct has nothing in it of that Obſtinacy which makes People Hereticks, according to the Canons of the Church.

We pray to God, Sir, for the long continuance and Proſperity of Your Majeſty's Reign; but after all, Your Majeſty is not Immortal. It may be Sir, that upon the Bed of Death, perhaps your Majeſty then may come to be touch'd with ſome Apprehenſions of Fear and Compunction, for having conſtrain'd the Conſciencies of Your Subjects who ſtill gave Your Majeſty an Account of their Faith with all Obedience and Reſpect, whenever you requir'd it from 'em. For the ſake of the Almighty, Sir, we implore Your Majeſty to conſider, that perhaps at the laſt Moments of Your Life, the dreadful Calamities of ſo great a Number of Your Subjects, into which the Malice of People, counterfeiting Devotion, have engag'd Your Majeſty to precipitate 'em, may come to preſent themſelves before Your Eyes, and trouble the Repoſe of Your Soul. For in a word, Sir, permit us to ſpeak it once more, what have we done to merit the drawing of Your Indignation upon us? Tho' our Religion were falſe, Your Majeſty, by ſending Your Teachers among us, to Inſtruct us, has done all that God requires from a Chriſtian Prince, without any Obligation that Piety laid upon You, to revoke your Word and Your Edicts. The ſame God who Ordains us to labour the Salvation of our Neighbours, forbids us to force the Conſcience, and

conſtrain

conſtrain Men to turn Hypocrites whether they will or no. We can hardly believe that the Violences which have been offer'd us e'er came to the Knowledg of Your Majeſty, or that You would endure that the Hiſtory of Your Glorious Reign ſhould be clouded with the Relations of 'em, and that ever it ſhould be ſaid, that You perſecuted Your Moſt faithful Subjects, becauſe they deſird to worſhip God according to his Word, and the Motions of their Conſciences, without any other Defect in their Duty. For theſe ſeveral Years that we have ſuffer'd, we have carefully examin'd our Religion. We can alſo ſay, tho' it ſhould prove to our Shame, that we have examin'd it with a ſecret deſire to meet with Errors in it, that we might be free to follow Your Majeſty's Orders: But this Examination has ſerv'd to no other purpoſe, then to corroborate us in the Faith we have profeſs'd from our Infancy.

We kept our ſelves in ſilence, ſo long as Your Majeſty was engag'd in a toilſome War. Now that You are labouring the Peace of *Europe*, vouchſafe us, Sir, what we demand with all the Reſpect we owe Your Majeſty, the Peace of our Conſciences. Some implore Your Majeſty, to reſtore 'em their Wives and their Children; others demand their Fathers and their Husbands. Some pray Your Majeſty, that they may be deliver'd from Cloyſters, Priſons, and Barbarous Climates, where they are confin'd among Savages; others to be releaſed from Chains and Gallys, where they ſit bound among the worſt of Caitiffs. Let us not be the only Perſons in diſtreſs to whom Your Throne and Goodneſs are inacceſſible. We beg of Your Majeſty to live peaceably, as humble Subjects, and faithful to Your Majeſty, with Liberty to Worſhip God according to our Conſciences. Suffer, Sir, Oh, ſuffer a great Number of Your Subjects, whom their Religion has conſtrain'd to depart Your Kingdoms, to return again, that they may end their Days under Your Royal Authority, and call upon God one among another, as we were accuſtom'd to do.

Receive, Great Sir, with your wonted Goodneſs, this Petition, which would have been ſubſcrib'd by ſeveral Thouſands of Perſons, if Your Majeſty would have given us Permiſſion. Give Ear to our juſt Demands. We Addreſs our ſelves to Your Majeſty, we Supplicate Your Majeſty to caſt your Eyes upon our Miſeries, and upon the Tears which we privately ſhed in our Families. Our Fidelity is known to Your Majeſty; return us, Great Sir, your Protection, and the Effects of your Goodneſs, and your Juſtice, which have been taken from us by Surprize, and upon falſe Accuſations, which have aggravated Your Majeſty's Prejudice againſt us. We ſhall pray to God, as ſtill we do, for the Proſperity of your Reign and of your Sacred Perſon, and we ſhall leave to our Children the ſame juſt Sentiments of Obedience and Fidelity. FINIS.

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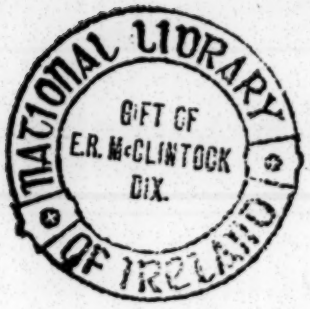
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